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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BUENOS AIRES 001858

E.O. 12958: DECL: 4/13/03
TAGS: OREP, PREL, PTER, AR
SUBJECT: VISIT OF CODEL GILMAN TO ARGENTINA APRIL 5-7

CLASSIFIED BY V. MANUEL ROCHA, CHARGE. REASON: 1.5
(B,D).

1. (U) MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
COMMITTEE, LED BY CHAIRMAN GILMAN AND INCLUDING
REPRESENTATIVES ACKERMAN, BALLENGER, DANNER,
FALEOMAVAEGA, MALONEY, SANFORD, AND STEARNS, VISITED
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ARGENTINA APRIL 5-7 TO DISCUSS PRIMARILY COUNTER-

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

2. (U) THE DELEGATION BEGAN ITS VISIT WITH A MEETING WITH MEMBERS OF ARGENTINA'S JEWISH COMMUNITY TO DISCUSS THE TWO TERRORIST BOMBINGS IN ARGENTINA, THE ATTACK ON THE ISRAELI EMBASSY AND THE AMIA JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER. MEMBERS OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY GROUP INCLUDED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE LARGEST ARGENTINE JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS AS WELL AS FAMILY MEMBERS OF VICTIMS OF BOTH ATTACKS. RUBEN BERAJA, THE LEADER OF THE LARGEST ARGENTINE JEWISH ORGANIZATION, DAIA, EXPLAINED THE COMMUNITY'S VIEW OF HOW THE INVESTIGATIONS INTO BOTH ATTACKS ARE PROGRESSING. HE REMARKED THAT THE USG NEEDS TO CONTINUE TO EXERT PRESSURE TO ENSURE THAT THE INVESTIGATIONS CONTINUE. HE THANKED THE USG FOR ITS CONTINUING SUPPORT. BERAJA SAID THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT HAD NOT PROVIDED AS MUCH ASSISTANCE AS THE USG HAD. WHEN ASKED HOW THE USG COULD PROVIDE FURTHER ASSISTANCE, BERAJA SAID JUDGE GALEANO, WHO IS LEADING THE AMIA CASE, WAS NOT THE PROBLEM. PRESIDENT MENEM, IN BERAJA'S VIEW, NEEDS TO BE REMINDED OF THE NEED TO MAKE PROGRESS. AMIA DIRECTOR HANSMAN SUGGESTED THAT THE TOPIC OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM SHOULD BE PUT ON THE AGENDA FOR THE SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS. B'NAI B'RITH PRESIDENT KOPEC ASKED THE USG TO WORK WITH ARGENTINE SECURITY SERVICES TO COMBAT ANTI-SEMITISM/RACISM.

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THE WHITE HELMETS

3. (U) THE DELEGATION WAS HOSTED AT DINNER BY AMBASSADOR OCTAVIO FRIGERIO, HEAD OF THE GOA'S "WHITE HELMETS" COMMISSION. FRIGERIO EXPLAINED THE WHITE HELMETS' ROLE AS AN INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE FORCE.

THE OPPOSITION ALLIANCE

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4. (SBU) ALLIANCE PARTY LEADERS FERNANDO DE LA RUA, THE MAYOR OF BUENOS AIRES AND THE HEAD OF THE RADICAL PARTY, AND GRACIELA FERNANDEZ MEIJIDE, FREPASO CONGRESSIONAL DEPUTY FOR BUENOS AIRES, MET WITH THE CODEL TO REVIEW DOMESTIC POLITICAL ISSUES. FERNANDEZ MEIJIDE SAID THE ARGENTINE JUDICIARY LACKS INDEPENDENCE, CITING PRESIDENT MEMEN'S ENLARGEMENT OF THE SUPREME COURT. SHE REMARKED THAT THE INVESTIGATION INTO THE ISRAELI EMBASSY BOMBING ALSO SHOWED THE HAND OF POLITICAL MANIPULATION. SHE CALLED FOR GREATER TRANSPARENCY IN POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS. DE LA RUA AGREED THERE ARE PROBLEMS IN THE ARGENTINE JUDICIARY BUT PROMISED THAT AN ALLIANCE GOVERNMENT WOULD CORRECT THINGS. HE ALSO RAISED THE CURRENT POLITICAL CRISIS IN PARAGUAY, NOTING THAT IT PRESENTS A TRUE CHALLENGE TO MERCOSUR WHICH REQUIRES THAT ITS MEMBERS MUST RESPECT DEMOCRATIC NORMS. ASKED ABOUT RELATIONS UNDER AN ALIANZA GOVERNMENT, FERNANDEZ MEIJIDE SAID THAT THE ALIANZA WANTS TO MAINTAIN EXCELLENT RELATIONS BUT WOULD NOT "AUTOMATICALLY" DO WHATEVER THE USG WANTED, AS SHE CLAIMED THE MENEM GOVERNMENT CURRENTLY

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DOES.

JUDGE GALEANO

5. (SBU) THE CODEL'S MEETING WITH AMIA INVESTIGATOR JUDGE JUAN GALEANO FOCUSED ON THE CASE'S CURRENT STATUS. CHAIRMAN GILMAN SAID MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ARE CONCERNED WITH THE LENGTH OF TIME IT TOOK THE GOA TO ESTABLISH ITS INVESTIGATIONS. GILMAN REMARKED THAT HE AND THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE DELEGATION APPRECIATED THE GOOD WORK THAT THE JUDGE HAD DONE IN PUSHING THE INVESTIGATION FORWARD. GALEANO SAID CHANGES IN ARGENTINA'S FOREIGN POLICY BROUGHT ABOUT WITH THE FIRST MENEM ELECTION ALIGNED THE GOA MUCH MORE CLOSELY WITH USG POLICIES. THE GOA HAD NOT BEEN AWARE OF ALL THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS POLICY SHIFT. THE GOA'S ALIGNMENT WITH THE ALLIES DURING THE GULF WAR HELPED CAUSE IT TO BECOME A TARGET OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM.

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6. (SBU) GALEANO SAID HIS INVESTIGATION IS PROGRESSING BOTH DOMESTICALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY, ALTHOUGH HE COULD NOT SHARE ALL THE DETAILS DUE TO THE SENSITIVE NATURE OF THE CURRENT COURT CASES INVOLVED. HE COMPLAINED THAT A MAJOR PROBLEM IS THAT MUCH OF THE INFORMATION HE HAS AVAILABLE IS BASED ON INTELLIGENCE SOURCES, WHICH MAKES
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IT VERY DIFFICULT TO USE IN OPEN COURT. HE CURRENTLY HAS SOME 50,000 PAGES OF EVIDENCE. HE WILL NOT MAKE A FINAL RULING IN THE CASE UNTIL HE IS SURE OF EVERY STEP. GILMAN ASKED IF THE REWARD PROGRAM WHICH THE HOUSE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE HAD SUGGESTED HAD BEEN OF ANY HELP. GALEANO REMARKED THAT HE HAD RECEIVED TIPS FROM SOURCES IN BOTH EGYPT AND SAUDI ARABIA. HE IS CURRENTLY INVESTIGATING THESE. GILMAN ASKED IF THE FBI (WHICH HAS A TEAM IN BUENOS AIRES FOR MOST OF APRIL) COULD BE OF MORE ASSISTANCE. GALEANO SAID THE FBI HAS BEEN OF MUCH ASSISTANCE AND HE HOPES TO CONTINUE WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE BUREAU. ACKERMAN SAID HE BELIEVES THE FBI CAN BE OF EVEN MORE ASSISTANCE. HOWEVER, THE FBI IS LIMITED IN WHAT IT CAN DO DUE TO JURISDICTIONAL CONSTRAINTS. HE BELIEVES IF THE GOA MADE ANOTHER FORMAL REQUEST, THE FBI COULD BE MADE TO DO MORE.

7. (SBU) ACKERMAN ASKED THE JUDGE IF HE WAS AWARE OF THE IRANIAN NATIONAL RESISTANCE COUNCIL'S RECENT CLAIMS OF INFORMATION REGARDING THE AMIA ATTACK. GALEANO SAID HE WAS, BUT HAD BECOME AWARE OF IT ONLY THROUGH READING THE "WASHINGTON POST." IT STRUCK HIM AS ODD THAT THE INRC DID NOT COME TO HIM WITH THIS INFORMATION, BUT RATHER TO THE U.S. CONGRESS. MUCH OF THE INC REPORT APPEARS TO CONTAIN INFORMATION WHICH HAS ALREADY COME TO LIGHT THROUGH OTHER MEANS. THE JUDGE BELIEVES IT IS STILL WORTH PURSUING, HOWEVER.

INTERIOR MINISTER CORACH

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8. (C) INTERIOR MINISTER CARLOS CORACH ASSEMBLED THE HEADS OF THE FEDERAL POLICE, THE GENDAREMIA (BORDER GUARDS), THE COAST GUARD, AND THE SPECIAL ANTI-TERRORIST UNIT TO MEET WITH THE DELEGATION. CORACH PROVIDED THE CODEL WITH A REVIEW OF THE SITUATION IN THE TRI-BORDER AREA AS WELL AS DETAILS OF RECENTLY SIGNED TRI-BORDER SECURITY PLAN (SEE BUENOS AIRES 1615). THE CODEL ASKED CORACH WHAT THE GOA NEEDS TO IMPROVE ITS SECURITY IN THE REGION. CORACH REPLIED THAT THE GOA COULD USE MORE OF EVERYTHING. IN PARTICULAR, HE SAID THE GOA IS VERY INTERESTED IN SCANNERS TO X-RAY CONTAINERS, RADARIZATION TO CONTROL ILLEGAL FLIGHTS IN THE AREA, AND HELP DEVELOPING DATA BANKS ARGENTINA, BRAZIL, AND PARAGUAY CAN USE TO MONITOR BORDER CROSSINGS. STEARNS REMARKED THAT THE SCANNERS THE USG USES ON THE BORDER WITH MEXICO HAVE NOT STOPPED SMUGGLING THERE. HE URGED THE GOA TO WORK WITH THE PARAGUAYAN GOVERNMENT TO CONTROL THE PROBLEM. CORACH AGREED BUT ADDED THAT CURRENT POLITICAL SCENE IN PARAGUAY MAKES IT DIFFICULT FOR THE GOP TO FOCUS ON OTHER ISSUES, NO MATTER HOW IMPORTANT THEY ARE.

9. (C) GILMAN ASKED CORACH HOW THE INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE ISRAELI EMBASSY AND AMIA BOMBINGS WERE PROGRESSING. CORACH SAID GALEANO'S WORK SEEMED TO BE MOVING AHEAD. THE CHIEF OF THE GOA'S ANTI-TERRORIST UNIT PALACIOS SAID THAT GALEANO HAD RECENTLY MET WITH CHIEF INVESTIGATOR FOR THE ISRAELI EMBASSY BOMBING CARNEVARI TO SEE IF THERE WERE ANY LINKS BETWEEN THE TWO CASES. CORACH SAID THE GOA WAS UNHAPPY WITH THE SCANT ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT IN THE EMBASSY BOMBING CASE.

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10. (SBU) GILMAN STRESSED THE NEED FOR THE GOA TO MOVE ON PATENT PROTECTION WITH INTERNATIONAL TRADE SECRETARY JORGE CAMPBELL. REP. BALLENGER ASKED WHY THE GOA HAS BEEN UNABLE TO MOVE ON IPR PROTECTION AFTER PRESIDENT MENEM'S PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEMS. CAMPBELL RECOGNIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF IPR PROTECTION AND HAS COMMITTED TO IT. THE GOVERNMENT IS WORKING HARD BUT HAS RUN INTO PROBLEMS WITH THE ARGENTINE CONGRESS. THE GOA HOPED THAT BILATERAL MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON ON THE SUBJECT WOULD HELP MOVE THE ISSUE FORWARD. CAMPBELL ADDED THAT SOFTWARE PROTECTION IS ALSO IMPORTANT AND ANOTHER HIGH GOA PRIORITY.

11. (SBU) CAMPBELL SAID THE GOA SUPPORTS THE FTAA AND WANTS TO SEE IT COME TO FRUITION. SANFORD ASKED IF THE GOA VIEWED THE USG AS PROTECTIONIST. CAMPBELL SAID THAT

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WHILE THE GOA DOES NOT VIEW THE USG AS PROTECTIONIST,
THERE ARE SEVERAL AREAS WHERE THE USG DOES PROVIDE ITS
DOMESTIC PRODUCERS WITH A FAIR DEGREE OF SUPPORT THROUGH
TARIFFS, ADMINISTRATIVE RESTRICTIONS, SUBSIDIES, AND
ANTI-DUMPING LEGISLATION. HE MENTIONED THAT RESTRICTIONS
ON PEANUTS, CITRUS, AND BEEF AFFECT ARGENTINE EXPORTS.
CAMPBELL CLAIMED THAT ARGENTINA CURRENTLY MAINTAINS NO
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QUALITATIVE NON-TARIFF BARRIERS EXCEPT FOR AUTOMOBILES.

FOREIGN MINISTER DI TELLA

12. (C) FOREIGN MINISTER GUIDO DI TELLA ADMITTED TO THE
CODEL THAT THE GOA HAD BEEN SLOW IN ESTABLISHING THE
INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE TWO TERRORIST ATTACKS. HE SAID
THE GOA IS "NOT PROUD" OF ITS EARLIER EFFORTS BUT CLAIMED

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ESPECIALLY THE AMIA INVESTIGATION WAS PROGRESSING WELL UNDER THE DIRECTION OF JUDGE GALEANO. THE FACT THAT THE GOA'S RELATIONS WITH THE DOMESTIC JEWISH COMMUNITY, ISRAEL AND THE UNITED STATES CONTINUE TO GO FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH SHOWS THAT THE BOMBINGS WERE FAILURES. ACKERMAN ASKED WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THE INVESTIGATIONS FIND THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE BOMBINGS. DI TELLA SAID THAT WHILE THERE IS NO CURRENT PLAN, THERE WOULD BE NO BREAKING OF RELATIONS. HE CLAIMED THE GOA WOULD NOT ALLOW TERRORISM TO DICTATE ITS POLICIES. HE SAID THE GOA IS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBLE PROBLEMS COMING FROM THE TRI-BORDER AREA AND FEARS A THIRD ATTACK. HE SAID THE GOA APPRECIATES ALL THE IMPORTANT COOPERATION IT RECEIVES FROM THE VARIETY OF USG AGENCIES.

13. (C) GILMAN ASKED FOR DI TELLA'S VIEWS ON CUBA. DI TELLA SAID THAT WHILE THE GOA CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT CUBA SHOULD NOT BE ADMITTED INTO THE OAS DUE TO ITS LACK OF DEMOCRACY, NEITHER SHOULD WE TRY TO CONTINUE TO ISOLATE IT. DI TELLA SAID ARGENTINA, AND THE REST OF LATIN AMERICA, HAVE TROUBLE UNDERSTANDING U.S. POLICY ON CUBA. HE CLAIMED THE U.S. EMBARGO HAS PROVIDED CASTRO

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WITH AN EXCELLENT EXCUSE TO CONTINUE REPRESSIVE MEASURES. THE EMBARGO IS ALSO EASILY CIRCUMVENTED. DI TELLA RECOMMENDED THAT THE USG END THE EMBARGO AND INSTEAD OPEN CUBA TO U.S. BUSINESS AND TOURISM. HE SAID HE IS SURE SUCH EXPOSURE WILL HAVE A MAJOR IMPACT ON CUBA'S POLITICS. HE CONCLUDED BY NOTING WHAT HE SAID APPEARED TO BE A CLEAR INCONSISTENCY BETWEEN THE U.S. POLICY OF "ENGAGEMENT" WITH CHINA BUT JUST THE OPPOSITE WITH CUBA.

14. (C) GILMAN ASKED ABOUT THE DRUG CERTIFICATION PROCESS. DI TELLA SAID A MULTILATERAL APPROACH WOULD BE MUCH APPRECIATED IN LATIN AMERICA. THE CURRENT SYSTEM TENDS TO PIT THE U.S. AGAINST THE REST OF LATIN AMERICA, A SITUATION WHICH IS NOT HEALTHY.

15. (C) ON THE FALKLANDS/MALVINAS, DI TELLA SAID THAT WHILE THE UK AND THE GOA ENJOY VERY GOOD RELATIONS, THERE IS NO GETTING AROUND THE FACT THAT A DISPUTE OVER THE

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TERRITORY EXISTS. THE GOA HAS ASKED THE UNITED NATIONS TO FORCE THE UK TO NEGOTIATE, SOMETHING THE BRITISH REFUSE TO DO. DI TELLA SAID IT IS IMPORTANT TO MANAGE THE DISPUTE AND LOOK FOR WAYS TO COOPERATE ELSEWHERE. THE GOA HOPES TO SIT DOWN WITH THE BRITISH IN THE NEAR FUTURE TO DISCUSS THE RANGE OF ISSUES. HE ADDED THAT THIS DOES MEAN THAT EVERYTHING WILL BE RESOLVED.

THE CONGRESS

16. (U) THE DELEGATION ALSO MET WITH THE BICAMERAL COMMISSION LOOKING INTO THE TWO TERRORIST ATTACKS.

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DEPUTY SORIA, THE HEAD OF THE COMMISSION, SAID THE USG AND THE GOA NEED TO CONTINUE WORKING TOGETHER TO SOLVE THE TWO CASES, AS WELL AS TO PREVENT FURTHER ATTACKS. SORIA AGREED THAT THE GOA HAD NOT BEEN WELL PREPARED TO DEAL WITH THE TWO INCIDENTS, ALTHOUGH IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER PREPARED FOLLOWING THE FIRST ATTACK. HIS COMMISSION HAS PREPARED A PRELIMINARY REPORT (WHICH HE PROVIDED CHAIRMAN GILMAN) ON ITS VIEWS OF THE INVESTIGATIONS. THERE IS NO CONSENSUS AMONG THE MEMBERS REGARDING THE ISRAELI EMBASSY INVESTIGATION, ALTHOUGH ALL SUPPORT THE WORK OF JUDGE GALEANO IN THE AMIA CASE. SORIA ASKED FOR MORE ASSISTANCE FROM THE USG. GILMAN SAID THE FBI WOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE COMMISSION'S HEARINGS, AS WOULD CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATORS. SORIA THANKED GILMAN FOR THE OFFER AND SAID THE COMMISSION WOULD ACCEPT IT.

PRESIDENT MENEM

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17. (C) THE CODEL REVIEWED WITH PRESIDENT MENEM A BROAD
RANGE OF ISSUES. GILMAN THANKED THE PRESIDENT FOR THE
MUCH IMPROVED BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP WHICH HAS ALLOWED US
TO WORK SO CLOSELY TOGETHER. HE MENTIONED THAT IT IS

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IMPORTANT WE CONTINUE TO WORK TOGETHER TO SOLVE THE TWO
BOMBING CASES. THE CHAIRMAN ALSO MENTIONED THE WORRYING
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SITUATION IN PARAGUAY AND ASKED MENEM FOR HIS VIEWS.
PRESIDENT MENEM SAID THE GOA HAD MADE A 180 DEGREE TURN
IN ITS FOREIGN POLICY SINCE HE HAD ASSUMED THE
PRESIDENCY. MAINTAINING GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED
STATES WAS AND IS AT THE TOP OF HIS PRIORITIES.

18. (C) MENEM SAID THE GOA HAD WORKED CLOSELY WITH THE
RANGE OF U.S. LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES IN THE TWO
TERRORIST ATTACK INVESTIGATIONS. THE GOA IS DOING
EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO SOLVE THE CASES. WHILE IT IS
DOUBTFUL THEY WILL EVER KNOW THE PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE FOR
THE ATTACKS, THEY CAN DETERMINE HOW THEY WERE CARRIED OUT
IN ORDER TO PREVENT THEM FROM HAPPENING AGAIN. REP.
ACKERMAN EXPRESSED HIS VIEW THAT THE FBI COULD OFFER MUCH
ASSISTANCE. MENEM SAID THE FBI IS ALREADY DOING MUCH WORK
WITH THE GOA. ACKERMAN SAID IT SEEMED THE ARGENTINE
JUDICIAL SYSTEM NEEDED TO BE MODERNIZED. MENEM SAID
THERE WERE SOME PROBLEMS IN THE LEGAL SYSTEM BUT THAT THE
GOVERNMENT HAD THE SYSTEM UNDER REVIEW. HE ASKED THE
CODEL NOT TO JUDGE THE ENTIRE SYSTEM BY TWO OR THREE
CASES. HE SAID HE HAD BEEN SURPRISED BY THE WAY THE O.J.
SIMPSON CASE HAD COME OUT BUT WOULD NOT BASE HIS VIEWS ON
THE ENTIRE U.S. SYSTEM ON THAT ONE CASE. GILMAN ASKED
WHAT THE USG COULD DO TO HELP IN THE TRI-BORDER AREA.
MENEM RESPONDED THAT THE GOA COULD USE MODERN TECHNOLOGY
IN THE AREA TO DETECT SMUGGLING OF BOTH NARCOTICS AND
CONTRABAND GOODS.

19. (C) ON IPR ISSUES, PRESIDENT MENEM MADE MANY OF THE
SAME POINTS MADE BY JORGE CAMPBELL ABOUT THE PROBLEMS
BETWEEN THE EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE BRANCHES. HE SAID
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HE WOULD CONTINUE TO WORK TO HAVE THE GOVERNMENT'S BILLS
ADOPTED. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE EFFECT ON ARGENTINA OF THE
SALE OF ADVANCED FIGHTERS TO CHILE, MENEM SAID IT WAS OF
NO CONCERN TO THE GOA IF CHILE PURCHASES NEW MILITARY
EQUIPMENT. THE TWO NATIONS HAVE EXCELLENT RELATIONS AND
THERE IS NO FEAR IN EITHER COUNTRY.

20. (C) ON PARAGUAY, MENEM SAID THE SITUATION IS
CRITICAL. HE REVIEWED THE ACTIONS THE GOA HAS TAKEN TO
HELP ENSURE THAT DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES GUIDE THE
ELECTION. HE SAID IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE REGIONAL
NEIGHBORS AS WELL AS THE U.S. LET THE GOP KNOW THEIR
CONCERNS.

21. (C) PRESIDENT MENEM ALSO RAISED THE NAZI GOLD ISSUE,
GIVING THE CODEL A REVIEW OF THE GOA'S ROLE IN THE
PROCESS. HE ALSO INFORMED THE GROUP OF THE RECENT
INTERVIEW WITH A CROAT EMIGRE WHO HAD BEEN THE COMMANDANT
AT A NOTORIOUS PRISON CAMP DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR
(SEE B.A 1811). HE PROMISED TO ENSURE THAT JUSTICE WOULD
BE SERVED.

TRI-BORDER REGION

22. (SBU) THE CODEL TRAVELED TO PUERTO IGUAZU IN THE
TRI-BORDER REGION TO RECEIVE A BRIEFING BY THE LOCAL
COMMANDERS OF THE ARGENTINE BORDER POLICE, CUSTOMS,
FEDERAL POLICE, AND IMMIGRATION SERVICE ON THE SITUATION
IN THE AREA. THE GROUP THEN TRAVELED INTO FOZ DE IGUAZU,
BRAZIL TO OBSERVE ACTIVITIES IN THE AREA SURROUNDING THE
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BRAZILIAN SIDE OF THE "AMISTAD" BRIDGE LINKING BRAZIL AND
PARAGUAY. ROCHA

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